A Feminist Approach to Counseling

INTRODUCTION

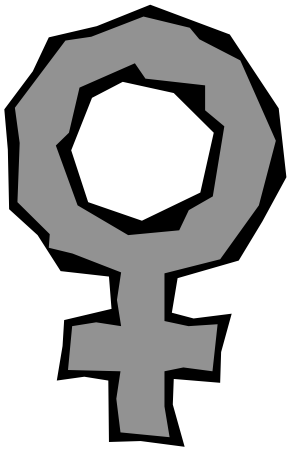
Counseling is a word that is often defined in a variety of different ways. Counsel, a dictionary definition, is "to exchange opinions and ideas, to discuss, to give advice or guidance--to help. But a more commonly used definition often implies assistance by a professional person with education and/or degrees, who by virtue of such education/degrees possesses the "wisdom" to show the "client" the path to wellness.

"Counseling as practiced in a sexual assault/abuse setting has as its foundation the concept of empowerment of the victim (defined as a victim or significant other). In this context, empowerment embodies the recognition that victims can determine what is best for their lives if they are offered support, advocacy, resources, and information. The philosophical basis of empowerment counseling recognizes that the sexual assault victimization is the presenting problem. The development of empowerment is accomplished through active listening, clarification of options, affirmation of the victim's decision-making capabilities and consciousness-raising about sexism and the cultural norms, which promote sexual violence. The goal of empowerment counseling is not only to return control to victims, but to support them in moving from victim to victor."

-PCAR Standards Manual, 7/86

In this section of the manual, the phrase helping relationship is used. The helping relationship is determined by the belief in empowerment counseling---a relationship that enables the victim to grow in the direction that person chooses, and to determine the goals and processes of the relationship with the assistance of a sexual assault counselor.

Each volunteer trainee brings her/his own individual skills and life experiences to your program. The training sessions increase their awareness of the helping relationship and refine and increase their skills. Role-playing and other experiential activities is the core of skill development.



A Feminist Approach to Counseling

The feminist approach to counseling was developed because traditional methods to therapy have proven inappropriate and ineffective in dealing with sexual assault and domestic violence. Feminist criticism of traditional therapy began when it became obvious that the "experts" in these fields reinforced traditional sex roles without recognizing that these roles sanction violence against women. Feminist therapists, in contrast, have concluded that women previously considered "sick" were reacting in the most adaptive ways they could to oppressive social institutions, restrictive sex roles, or the abusive men in their lives. (Taken from the training manual of the Lancaster Shelter for Abused Women, 8/90)

In this light it becomes easier to see abused women not merely as helpless victims. Rather, they are survivors with remarkable strengths, which certainly qualify them to be equal partners with us in the counseling process.

This section begins with two articles listing and describing the components of feminist counseling. These are followed by an article, which elaborates on some of the components and "previews" some of the issues to be addressed later in the manual.

Feminist Analysis

Social Rather than Personal Problem

Feminist counseling views all "personal" problems in the context of a sexist society and helps women understand the real oppression and socially-defined roles which reinforce their victimization and their feelings of powerlessness.

Perpetrator Responsible for Violence

The sexually assaulted/battered woman is never blamed for the abuse she has suffered. The helper should never excuse violent acts (except in self-defense) and should place responsibility for the violence on the perpetrator.

Helper as Educator

The helper's role includes educating the woman about the facts of sexual assault and battering as social and political problems.

Advocacy Rather Than Therapy

The woman coming for help is assumed to be a basically healthy person who needs understanding, information, support and advocacy. Being physically, emotionally or sexually abused, in itself, does not indicate a need for therapy.

Helper As Peer

The helper and the victimized woman are peers; 'the helper is in the role of providing support and skills to the woman, but does not hold power or authority over her.

Women Helping Women

Sexually assaulted/battered women need support from other women at the time of crisis in order to understand and overcome our common oppression as women.

Peer support

Abused women can benefit from the support of other abused women in order to break down their isolation and gain perspective.

Self- Help

The helper's goal is to help the abused woman become strong and independent, not to take over for her or make her dependent on the helper. When much support is needed, "walk with her" rather than do for her.

Empowerment

The helper's goal is empowerment; her job is to help the woman gain the skills and confidence to exercise power over her own life.

Overcoming Stereotypes

The helper is committed working to overcome her own biases and stereotypes in order to be an effective helper for women from backgrounds and situations different from her own.

Language

The helper must be aware of how her language conveys her philosophy,
attitudes, and stereotypes. Her language should acknowledge women's growth and power rather than perpetrating negative images.

Woman Controls Choice of Options

The helper leaves the choice of options to the woman, and supports her as a person no matter what she decides, even if the helper does not agree with her choice.
8/90

Module 3 – Reading 4

Feminist Philosophy and Approach

The counseling and advocacy model that we are presenting in this curriculum is based on a feminist philosophy, which makes **five basic assumptions** about the nature of the counseling process.

1. Feminist counseling and advocacy views all personal problems in the context of a sexist society and helps women understand the real oppression and socially defined roles which reinforced their victimization and their feeling of powerlessness.
2. In a feminist model the woman coming for help is assumed to be a basically health person who needs understanding, information and support in order to make changes in her life.
3. The women involved in feminist counseling and advocacy are assumed to have a reciprocal relationship between equals.
4. In the feminist model it is assumed that women are best able to help other women overcome social barriers.
5. A feminist counselor/advocate who is aware of the role of society in shaping personal attitudes and reinforcing personal problems, will want to become conscious of her own cultural biases and stereotypes in order to effectively support all the women whom she helps.

Elements of the Feminist Approach to Helping

- Social rather than personal problem
- Perpetrator responsible for the violence
- Helper as educator
- Advocacy rather than therapy
- Helper as peer
- Women helping women
- Peer support
- Self-help
- Empowerment
- Overcoming stereotypes
- Language
- Woman controls the choice of options

The Woman Knows What is Best for her Life

- The helper's role is to provide information and articulate options; to assist the woman in developing skills such as problem-solving, assertiveness, conflict resolution, in accordance with the woman's goals.
- The woman can identify and articulate her own goals.

The Power Component Between Helper and Helpee Should be **Equalized**

- The helper shares her values and goals in a way that does not hinder the woman from holding and expressing different values and goals.
- The helper demystifies the helping process, by explaining her role as a clarifier, questioner, supporter, and teacher who wants to help the woman set and achieve her own goals, and by explaining the ways in which the development of their relationship can strengthen the woman in her other relationships.
- The helper assists the woman in becoming aware of her own power by highlighting the power the woman has in all areas of her life, thus providing an antidote to the powerless feelings engendered by the abusive relationship.
- The helper shares, when appropriate, personal life experiences, which are relevant to the woman's experiences.
- The helper is a woman supporting another woman, building trust and Sisterhood .
- In-group processes, groups are co-facilitated and all group members are encouraged to share responsibility for group maintenance functions.

Women's Experiences Create a Special, Different View of the World

- By sharing their experiences, women identify common feelings and perspective which foster a connectedness among women.
- These personal experiences, when shared, constitute a social consciousness, which in turn, creates political strength.
- Consciousness-raising in all-women groups is a method by which we can understand, articulate, and appreciate our worldview and our connectedness.

Women's Anger is Elicited and Accepted as an Appropriate Response to Living in This Culture

- It is legitimate to be angry at the deprivation, the discrimination, the violence, the invisibility we encounter as women.
- Sharing anger decreases self-blame and feelings of depression.
- That anger can be redirected into a force for changing the system.

Healing is Aided by Political Consciousness and Action

- The helper shares her understanding of sex role expectations and the way these expectations define our world and limit us.
- The helper shares her understanding that sexism is pervasive and institutionalized, and so affects us every day.
- The helper focuses on the actions to be taken in the woman's life, rather than focusing exclusively on introspection and self-reflection.
- The helper models the ways in which women can network and support each other.
- The helper encourages the woman to build the collective strength of women through social change or political action.

8/90

Feminist Philosophy

The counseling model we are presenting in this manual is based on a feminist philosophy, which makes five basic assumptions about the nature of the counseling process.

1) **Feminist counseling views all "personal" problems in the context of a sexist society and helps women understand the real oppression and socially defined roles which reinforced their victimization and their feelings of powerlessness.** In counseling sexually assaulted/battered women, a large part of your role will be to communicate to your clients this vision and understanding through the facts about sexual assault/domestic violence already presented. The difference between your own oppression as a woman and that of the abused woman is essentially one of degree. The issues the abused woman must struggle with-such as balance of power in relationships, being viewed as her husband's property, and finding her own worth as a woman in a sexist society-are the same issues that you and all women face daily to some degree. Given woman's particular life experiences, strengths and weaknesses, as well as resources, you might also be struggling with all the problems of sexual assault and domestic violence.

2**) In a feminist model the woman coming for help is assumed to be a basically healthy person who needs understanding, information and support in order to make changes in her life.** She is responsible for her own life decisions, and your role is to help her tap her own strengths and abilities, and to recognize and experience her potential as a woman. You as counselor can put forward the conscious expectation that she will take charge of her own life, even though she may be in the habit of being dependent, will not believe at first that she can make decisions, and will appear to be unable to do so. You can help her learn to, and encourage her to act on her own competence rather than allowing yourself to see her as helpless and tell her what to do.

3**) The women involved in feminist counseling are assumed to have a reciprocal relationship between equals.** We will use the terms "counselor" and "client" to define different roles, which are interchangeable depending on the skills and needs of the individuals involved. It is basic to the feminist philosophy that the term "counselor" does not connote power, value, or authority, and when you take on the role of "counselor" you also assume responsibility for communicating this to your "clients". You may have special training in a particular mode of therapy, and you can use this if you and the woman agree that it is appropriate--however, in a

peer relationship you should see this as the sharing and teaching of skills. As a peer you see yourself as a woman sharing the position of your "client" in society, and involve yourself in the counseling process by openly sharing your skills and your own
experience, which might be helpful to her in taking charge of her own life.

4) **In the feminist model it is assumed that women are best able to help other women overcome the societal barriers, and several years of counseling women victims of sexual assault and domestic violence have confirmed that other women can best provide support at this time**. Many abused women are defensive toward all men because of their traumatic experiences with their abuser and cannot feel safe with a male counselor. Also, their sense of identity is usually centered in their mate, and through feminist counseling they can begin to break this dependence and learn to receive emotional support from other women and from within themselves. Male counselors, however, can be helpful in working with male victims, couple counseling when the violence has ceased, or at a later time when the woman is no longer in danger and has gained some perspective on her victimization.

5**) Finally, as a feminist counselor who is aware of the role of society in shaping personal attitudes and reinforcing personal problems, you will want to become conscious of your own cultural biases and stereotypes in order to effectively support all of the women you counsel. We all unconsciously segregate others according to their race, their ethnic or economic group, or other arbitrary divisions.** It is also easy to assume that all victims/ survivors have the same value systems, religious beliefs, and life-style that you do, or to feel that they should have. In order to counter these attitudes in yourself, you can become sensitive to your internalized oppression- attitudes based on sexist, racist, or classist myths which you have accepted about yourself, and which you can learn to reject both for yourself and for the women you counsel. And you can actively learn about the real differences in life experience, which affect women from cultural backgrounds different from your own. -Adapted from PCADV and Women Against Abuse, Philadelphia, 8/90

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Examples of Empowerment Counseling

- Helping women think about their situations, to realize they are not alone and that other women have had similar experiences.
- Helping women figure out what they want.
- Identifying feelings such as fear and powerlessness, which may be preventing women from making decisions.
- Sharing knowledge about bureaucracies.
- Helping women analyze the ways in which violence has controlled and limited their lives.
- Organizing a group of battered women as a support and advocacy network for one another. And stepping aside when they are ready to take ownership and leadership.
- Being honest; our lives are not perfect either. Offering your own experiences if relevant.
- Giving women the help and information they need to do things for themselves—even if it means saying no to their requests sometimes.
- Offering resources—who, what, when, where.
- Helping women gain a sense of self-confidence and the ability to take care of themselves.
- Challenging gently. And challenging each other about the ways in which we continue to take power away from battered women.
- Being respectful of women's decisions. Each woman needs to be comfortable with and own her decisions.
- Realizing and building on the commonality of women's experiences and recognizing the differences and diversity of women as well.
- Expressing interest and concern for each woman.

- Role playing new situations so a woman feels more comfortable doing them herself.
- Assisting a woman in re-naming her experiences in terms of survival rather the victim-blaming labels others have used to describe her response to the violence.
- Modeling ethical communication and providing women the opportunities for practicing new ways of communicating with each other and their children.
- Praising women for what they do well, especially in front of their children.

This is a revised, expanded version of a list found in *For Shelter and Beyond: Ending Violence Against Battered Women and Their Children* by the Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Service Groups. (Revised 1990)

COUNSELOR/ADVOCATE ISSUES

MANAGING ONE'S OWN FEELINGS

As a counselor and advocate for battered woman and sexual assault survivors, we often see a lot of pain and hear stories about the most terrible things human beings do to one another. Providing services may be overwhelming and draining. Participating in a larger social change movement in which the changes are not as far-reaching and fast as we want them to be can sometimes be frustrating and disheartening. (Adapted from PCADV manual) But as Ellen Bass and Laura Davis point out in their work, The Courage to Heal, counselors oftentimes choose one extreme or another after sharing in the pain and carrying the responsibilities of helping. Counselors may shield themselves from the survivor to the extent that they are really not present emotionally, or a counselor may absorb all the pain and collapse. Neither extreme is helpful to the advocate/counselor or the person she is trying to help.

Counseling victims can activate many very basic or primitive feelings, perhaps more forcefully than other types of counseling. Because victimization undermines a person's basic sense of self--of being a human individual--feelings about issues of extreme vulnerability, profound confusion, ambivalence, powerlessness, and sexuality may emerge in counseling. These feelings may evoke similar issues for the counselor.

Counselors need to attend to these and other feelings as they arise. The process of managing feelings involves, first of all, making decisions about which feelings to share with a woman, taking into consideration timing and potential for intense reaction. We value being real with women and yet want to choose carefully which feelings we will share. At times it can be therapeutically valuable to disclose part of our own experiences with sexual or other victimization; but the decision to share must consider not only the feelings evoked in the counselor, but also what the woman needs at that time. It is crucial to be aware that it is not always useful to the woman to share one's feelings.

The second part of managing one's own feelings comes when we decide not to share something with a woman, or after we have shared it--we can take note of it and plan to deal with it later. This can mean thinking about it at another time, seeking supervision in our work with a

woman and working our way through our own feelings about it, or just talking about it with colleagues. The main objective is to be sure our feelings are aired and addressed. Processing these feelings can be as difficult for us as it is for battered women and sexual assault victims, but if we do not pay attention own issues, we become less effective in our work. When feelings are too painful we become detached or distracted or "professional" and no longer provide a healthy model for those who seek our assistance in dealing with their own victimization.

NEED FOR CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

Because sexual assault and domestic violence affects so many aspects of people's lives, we find that women present a host of problems connected to the abuse. We may find ourselves in need of expertise in these related areas-depression, suicidal gestures, substance abuse, eating disorders, developmental delays, and other problems. In addition, an understanding of child development is important in working with both child and adult survivors.

This need for additional knowledge is often a difficult one to fill, because of the lack of helpful information on working with sexual assault survivors. This situation is changing, with more research into the complexities of child sexual assault in particular. But the study of sexual assault issues is still limited, so that we may never feel as though we know as much as we might. As a result, we process our thoughts with other counselors; make use of resources in related fields such as psychology, social work, and child development; and pay attention to women as they work through their victimization, to better understand their experiences.

GETTING SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

In counseling sexual assault survivors and battered women, the need for support is especially great, the potential for burnout high. The way we choose to relate to survivors, and the fact that some of us are on call during evenings and weekends, also contribute to the stress. The above-mentioned issues, managing feelings and needing information, are two reasons we ask one another for support and supervision. We need a place to put our frustration, anxieties, and we need a place to be replenished.

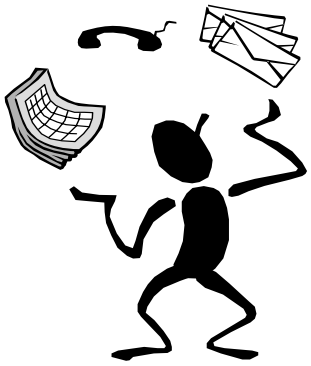
There are other reasons we experience a high need for support. One is loneliness. Few mental health professionals have useful knowledge of child sexual assault. Often, information people do have is dated or incorrect. Although we enjoy providing training and consultation to other professionals, we still experience isolation. We can seek outside supervision on particularly troubling cases but rarely can ask for help with specific sexual abuse issues.

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES

If I can't dance,
I don't want to be part of your revolution.

Emma Goldman

Now that we have learned much about violence against women and acquired the skills to help its victims, it is very important that we keep in mind as we do this work that we must also take care of ourselves--each of us individually and all of us collectively. The selections in this part of our manual discuss how we can take care of ourselves in a number of ways: by learning skills related to self-defense, by learning to manage stress and avoid burnout and by learning and practicing skills for communicating and resolving conflicts with each other in mutually empowering ways.



MANAGING PERSONAL STRESS

At times, victims' tales of heartache and brutality may become too much for you to handle--unexpectedly you find yourself touched, shaken. Court personnel tell of lunchtime tears and lingering feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Nightmarish stories accompany them home; crowding their thoughts and dreams, and causing advocates to dread the next time someone says to them, " I need to get a protection order."

Unfortunately, not all emotional stress can be avoided. It is important to remember that such feelings are normal and okay to have. In order to keep this stress at a manageable level, however, you should have guidelines on how to work with victims.

Maintain an appropriate relationship with the victim and be aware you cannot solve all of her problems.

How do I know that I'm not just wasting my time?

Do not judge the value of your help by whether the victim does what you think is best. You may spend considerable time with a victim, only to discover that the parties have reconciled. This in no way reflects on you, nor should it affect the assistance you provide to the next battered woman. Your positive influence is important--it has a subtle impact that may not be immediately evident. Victims are more likely to seek needed assistance from us in the future if they find compassionate assistance during their initial contacts.

Research on battered women shows that it is common for a victim to leave and reconcile several times before making a final decision to leave. You do not know how many steps she has taken on her road to a violence-free life. She may have previously begun the protection order process, and then felt overwhelmed by the legal system. Her abuser may have made threats, which stopped her in her tracks. She may have concluded that absence from work will cost her a job essential for her survival. Or the batterer may have promised to enroll in an abuser treatment group. Our support and/or a protection order will not erase the gripping fear she has lived with for so long, only time will make each step easier.

Why won't they listen to my advice?

It is easy to begin feeling responsible for a victim. This is a mistake for both of you. Do not assume you know what is best for the woman. She knows her situation best. What seems like a plausible solution to you may be unworkable from the victim's viewpoint. Your advice, if not taken now, will be remembered later and become part of the information that the woman factors into her future decision-making.

How should I respond when victims direct their anger at me- -and I have done what I can?

While the victim does not deserve to be abused, neither do you. The victim's anger and frustration are directed at the system--of which you may be viewed as apart. You may be seen as someone who won't help, not as someone who can't. Give respect, and expect the same. If a victim becomes verbally abusive say: "I understand that you are upset and frustrated. You need to calm down so we can look at your options. Possibly I can refer you to someone who can help you deal effectively with your situation."

How can I keep the stress from building up so I don't get "burned out"?

- *Maintain interest, but not preoccupation--don't dwell on the situation. Recognize that you have done what you can and try not to take your work home with you.*
- *Maintain support systems--reach out to those who can support and comfort you. If you feel you are too upset by working with battered women, share this concern with a staff person or your supervisor.*
- *Do not get into personal sharing, personal help or commitments with the victim. Do not give out your home phone number, address, etc.*

➢ *Be sure to take breaks! Take time in between to breathe deeply. Get out of the office and walk at lunch or sit quietly and think through who you are again.*

BURNOUT

Definition:
A progressive loss of idealism, energy and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions as a result of their conditions at work.

Burn-out:

- *can't be prevented or planned;*
- *is highly contagious;*
- *is cyclical, not linear--comes in stages;*
- *realizing it will happen repeatedly, it can be planned for and can be anticipated.*

Stages of Burnout

Enthusiasm

Over identification with the women being served. "Job" is everything. Excessive and inefficient use of time. Initial period of high hope, high energy and expectations.
Need: realistic enough to cope with discovering conditions without loss of idealism.
Intervention: Training is the best point at which to intervene. Before damage, instill realism.

Stagnation

Process of being stalled, after initial stage of enthusiasm. Loss of idealism.
Need: shift from program's needs to individual's needs (money, hours, etc.)
Intervention: Movement must take place (Workshops, courses.
Validate the concerns--what can we work out?)

Frustration

Person questions effectiveness of doing one's job, value of job itself.
Issue: politics, powerlessness and no support for decisions.
Intervention: Find a way to channel frustration in a new creative way.

Apathy

Natural defense against frustration. Progressive emotional detachment. Avoids challenges.
Issue: Is there a way to turn around caring, which causes disappointment?
Intervention: Creative new involvement (Suggestion--take time away from job to allow creativity to surface and then ask, "what is here to interest you?").

Counseling Techniques and Burnout

There are many stressful factors in working with battered women and sexual assault victims/survivors that can contribute to burnout. Examples of stressors you may encounter include: anxiety resulting from the life threatening nature of physical abuse; hostility from those who deny the existence of domestic violence; inadequate funding resulting in understaffing; women resisting your efforts to help and frustration in acquiring services from other agencies in

the community. In addition, there is often more to do than is possible when working with battered women and sexual assault victims. Because of this, many workers are tempted to push themselves beyond their limits by trying to do everything. Efforts to "do it all" will contribute to burnout.

The symptoms of burnout can be grouped into three categories:

1) ***Emotional and Physical Exhaustion***: You may become irritable, anxious, or depressed. Physical complaints often emerge such as chronic colds, tension headaches and stomach problems.
2) ***Disillusionment***: Excitement and satisfaction in doing your job may decline.
3) ***Self-doubt and Blame***: Self-doubt often results from the cumulative effects of exhaustion and disillusionment

Being aware of the symptoms of burnout can alert you to the need to make some changes in your attitude and behavior. Burnout can be prevented. The following are some suggestions of ways to prevent burnout to keep in mind when working with battered women.

Suggestions for Burnout

+ Share your feelings with your co-workers, supervisor, and/or the Volunteer Coordinator.
+ Share with your spouse and/or friends in your personal life. (Caution: Confidentiality).
+ Cultivate feelings of pleasure and competency in other areas of your life.
+ Practice good health habits.
+ Remember your limits.

Burn-out References:

- Dr. Herbert J. Freudenberger, Burnout (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).
- Genny NiCarthy, Karen Merniam, and Sandra Coffman, Talking It Out: A Guide to Groups for Abused Women (Seattle: The Seal Press,1984).

Characteristics of Burnout

+ rigidity
+ cynicism
+ resistance to new idea/programs
+ inflexibility
+ find Fault with system not with self
+angry
+ less productive
+ less energetic
+ works harder, accomplishes less
+ depressed
+ tired

+ irritable
+ quiet in staff meetings
+ becomes suspicious/paranoid
+ physically run down
+ susceptible to psychosomatic complaints
+ negative attitude
+ personal problems, i.e. marital conflict
+ makes sharp distinction between professional/personal life
+ flight - leaves office/shelter during day
+ goes by book/rules in dealing with women
+ changes terminology in referring to women,
i.e. "a paranoid-schiz”

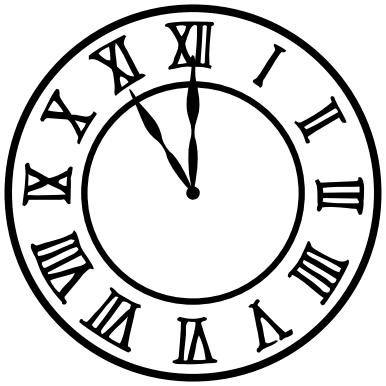
Causes of Burnout

- unrealistic expectations
- emotional drain of dealing with problems
- low status
- low pay
- long hours
- too many women to counsel
- too much time spent in direct service
- expectations by society to be devoted to a job 24 hours a day
- lack of support among peers—program--community
- minimal power
- inconsistent reward from women sewed
- poor institutional factors, i.e. policies, procedures
- see colleagues getting rewarded in areas other than direct service
- poor training in dealing with burn-out issues

~Myths that contribute to Burn-out~

- helping people will fulfill all needs and furnish all satisfaction
- all counselors are warm, open, honest
- individuals can control their own lives
- every problem has a solution
- there's a potential for an infinite number of crisis calls/contacts
- all women will appreciate counselor's efforts
- counselors should remain dedicated and available 100% of the time, 24 hours a day
- counselors should sacrifice their own needs for the cause of mankind

--Adapted from: Burn& Among Women in The Helping Professions



TIME MANAGEMENT

There are thousands of techniques for time management, but few of us have the time to develop skills in each of them. An effective approach that allows the user to concentrate on the vital few techniques that will produce the greatest results is the Pareto Principle. The Pareto Principle suggests that 20% of the activity will produce 80% of the achievable results. For example, 80% of sick leave is taken by 20% of the employees. Eighty per cent of your daily file usage is in 20% of your files.

Once you understand that you can achieve 80% of your results by applying 20% of your effort, you begin to realize that by expending the remaining 80% of your effort you only have 20% of the results to gain. At this point you have to make a decision. Is that extra 20°/0 result worth the 80% effort? Only you can decide that, but it's important to be aware of the diminishing returns inherent in any project. Those who wish to get the biggest return with the least amount of effort will invest 20% in each project. Take the 80% results then move to the next project to do the same. The vital 20% of activities that will help you to become more time effective are:

1. Personal Organization

a. Know what activities you want to accomplish and prioritize them.
b. Keep desk, work area and files cleaned and organized.
c. Keep a plan sheet or calendar and organize daily and future activities.

2. Plan Tasks

a. Establish long and short term goals and objectives.
b. Write these down.
c. Convert goals into activities that can be accomplished.

3. Eliminate Unnecessary Tasks

a. Resist pressure to become involved in unimportant activities.
b. Log every activity for one week and eliminate unimportant activities.
c. Delegate all appropriate activities.

Understanding and applying these time management techniques will help you increase personal output. Although they do take time and effort, especially at first, you will be rewarded with more free time while accomplishing tasks quickly and efficiently.

Relaxation Exercise

First, make yourself comfortable. Sit with your back straight and your feet on the floor or cross-legged whichever you prefer.

Try not to move during this exercise. If your nose itches, ignore it. If you finally can't stand it, go ahead and scratch it; but first try not to.

Place your hands in your lap and close your eyes. Take a deep, full, slow breath. As you inhale count One to yourself. Breathe all the way into your abdomen. Then slowly exhale all the way out and count Two to yourself, silently. Inhale slowly again and count Three; out on Four. Slow, deep breathes. In on Five. Out on Six. In, Seven. Out, Eight. In on Nine. Out on Ten. Now start over at One and breath in with a slow, deep breath.

If you lose count, start over at One. Just count your breaths. If a thought comes, don't acknowledge it; but don't fight it. Just let it pass on through your mind like a cloud floating by. Just go on counting your breaths. Let any thoughts float through your head. Don't take hold of them. Ignore any sounds; let them float on through, also. Simply go on counting your breaths. Any odors or sounds or feelings or thoughts don't matter. Don't fight them but don't acknowledge them. Just go on counting your breaths…

When you get to Ten, start over at One. If you lose count, start over at One. Just keep counting your breaths; let the thoughts go through. (Repeat occasionally). After 5-20 minutes. Now, when you are ready, open your eyes and slowly stretch. The exercise is over.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH WOMEN IN CRISIS

- ✓ Don't work in isolation; you may try to shoulder too much of the burden for change and become victimized yourself.
- ✓ Don't underestimate the reverberations throughout your life in response to working with abuse:
  - ❑ Friends and relatives may confide to you their battering experiences;
  - ❑ The resulting immersion in domestic violence is a revolutionary and disheartening experience;
  - ❑ Working with women on the edge of crisis who may never have told anyone but you about battering brings a level of tension to your life that can seep into your bones
- ✓ Make sure you have a support system:
  - ❑ Someone with whom to discuss your work and help you to see your own blocks:
  - ❑ Continue consciousness-raising within your program;
  - ❑ If necessary, for your own support group.
- ✓ Keep your expectations low and realistic--respect the woman's own pacing.
- ✓ If you are not growing and changing in your own work, ask yourself, "What am I closing off; how am I avoiding risk?"
- ✓ Pay attention to what aspect of her behavior is most frustrating

and/or anger provoking to you. She may be touching some part in yourself that you don't want to accept.

- ✓ Enjoy the highs of the changes you are privileged to be a part of.
- ✓ Do what you tell women that you work with to do:
  - ❑ Take care of yourself; use your own self-nurturing skills;
  - ❑ Don't internalize all of your feelings; transform the experiences into other forms such as writing, exercising, etc. (Whatever works for you).

    Try not to overload yourself, so that you will avoid being overwhelmed and continue being effective.

    --Women's Center of Montgomery County, adapted from Tosalind Dutton, M.S.S.

HOW TO HANDLE A BURNED-OUT PERSON

Up to this point, the focus of this section has been primarily directed toward the identification of your own specific symptoms and suggestions for self-treatment. Hopefully, the signs and signals of an incipient or severe burnout condition have been digested well enough to ensure prevention, reversal, and a lasting cure.

However, having become well informed and better able to deal with bum-out symptoms when they begin to emerge in your life, perhaps you'll need to know how to handle someone else who, you may suspect, is burning out.

Not surprisingly, in our fast-paced society, burnout has achieved epidemic proportions, and while numbers of people complain of its symptoms, few understand the seriousness of that complaint. Fewer still are trained in spotting symptoms, taking the appropriate preventive steps to stop the momentum, or in advising others when the telltale signs appear.

You're now in a good position to offer some support, guidance, or assistance to a friend, a family member, a husband or lover, a woman on your staff, or a colleague who is demonstrating the symptoms of stress and strain endemic to burnout.

Suppose, for a moment, you have a friend who has, over the past few weeks or months, grown rather distant and remote, unexpectedly bursts out in tears, frequently complains of colds, headaches, and fatigue, has taken on an earnestness which belies her characteristic sense of irony and humor, complains of sleepless nights, and perhaps is drinking far more than her usual limit. You've also noticed that she's become quite inflexible in her opinions and judgments, is deeply involved in "having things done the right way," and has begun to speak with a bitter cynicism about the ways of people and the world.

Before you were educated in the dynamics of burnout, you might have backed off until she was "herself again," or jumped in and tried to "save" her by jointly commiserating over the rotten deal life turned out to be. Now, however, since you've got a handle on the attitudes, behavior, feelings, and language of burnout both of those reactions can be rejected. You know what's happening to her, but does she? And how can you help her without pushing her further away?

Here are some suggestions for handling a burned-out person. But, before you begin to act on them, please hear this note of caution: If in offering some guidance to a friend you're putting an additional burden of stress and pressure on yourself and are overextending your limits, you

may have to attend to your own needs first. These suggestions are not intended to place you in another nurturing role, nor are they designed to tug at the strings of your sense of virtue. However, if you are not burning out yourself, by all means do offer your support and intelligence to that other person.

1. **Approach your friend with sincerity and compassion**. You might want to open up the issue by suggesting she may be experiencing burnout and that you might be able to help. If you've been through the bum-out experience yourself, you could describe some of the feelings and attitudes that reflect hers to both gain her trust and put her at ease.
2. **It is imperative that you listen to what she's saying, and that your responses be noncritical and nonjudgmental.** Urge her to ventilate her angers, frustrations, hurts, loneliness, and feelings of powerlessness, dependencies, and fears. Allow her to repeat herself. She may be so backed up with exhaustion and irritability that she may need to be repetitive.

Along the way, you might encourage her to talk about positive aspects of herself--her accomplishments, her competence, her desirability as a friend, her personality, and even her personal charm--her looks, hair, clothes, body image, or manner of speaking. Although she's dealing with the confusion of burnout, she may still inwardly respond to the more flattering aspects of herself and be grateful for the reminders.

3. **Be honest with her. Don't dismiss, deny, or diminish her feelings. Don't try to fool her with false cheerfulness or optimism**. Burnouts are particularly sensitive to the false fronts of others. While she may be denying the neglect in her own life, she may be, nonetheless, unconsciously attuned to her need for sincerity and empathy. Initially, if you try to laugh it up with her, she might outwardly respond in like fashion, but inwardly back away and feel disappointed.
4. **Try to help her to think through her maze of confusions**. Avoid analyzing, "psychologizing," or using any expressions, which could be construed as superior, patronizing, or condescending. She may be struggling with similar disparaging attitudes on the job or at home, and could either shrink from further discussion, or lash out unexpectedly. Her emotions are raw right now. While she may need to lean, she might also be fiercely attempting to keep her dignity intact.
5**. Don't flood her with advice.** She may be unable to hear what you're saying, or take it all in. Her concentration span may be limited. Too much advice may overwhelm and frighten her. She may act as if she's listening, but may be secretly regarding your over zealousness as yet another demand.
6. **Encourage her to trace when and how she began to feel troubled-overstressed, frightened, and fatigued.** Ask her to try to ascertain what events were taking place at that time, what person or people she was bent on pleasing and impressing to gain approval, what models she was trying promoted burn-out within her. If it helps her to organize her thoughts, write down some of the main points of your conversation, or perhaps even tape it. It will help you bother to reflect as your conversations occur.
7. **Ask her if she perceives herself as changed--different from the ways in which she perceived herself in the past.** Encourage her to talk about the changes she recognizes in her attitudes, her behavior, her feelings, and perhaps her appearance.

Point out to her that others who have undergone burnout have experienced the same changes and that, because she's burning out, they're not unusual. This will help to diminish some of her anxiety.

8. **Suggest that she begin to explore those situations, people, and events which cause her to overreact or under react**. Ask her to try and pinpoint what makes her angry, what disappoints her, bores her, frustrates her, and what promotes the sense of powerlessness in her. Help her to detect those same trouble spots on the job, socially, at home, and in her intimate relationships. This will aid her in diminishing some of the jolts and uncomfortable surprises she may repeatedly experience in her life.

9. **Open up the issue of the "musts" and "shoulds" women commonly fall prey to.** Help her to speak about her early family conditioning and what was expected of her. You might point out how those older family dynamics have transferred themselves onto her adult life and are now acting as additional stress-extenders.

Remember: What you're opting for her is some guidance in self-awareness. It may take some time before she's willing or able to incorporate this information.

10. **Encourage her to speak about her values**. She may have grown too distant from her authentic values to distinguish between the real and essential and the unreal and unessential. In the talking, she'll be reminding herself of what is deeply precious to her and what has been superimposed upon her life. Urge her to reevaluate where she wants to go, where she needs to go, and where she's actually going. This might provide her with fresh insight and help to reground her.

11. **Help her to organize some short-term and some long-term goals.** Introduce the idea of pacing to her--how necessary it is to balance her life according to her own style and rhythms. Don't be afraid to express your concern if, in describing her goals, you understand she's set up excessive burdens, grandiose standards of perfection, and impossible achievements and accomplishments. She may not respond to your concern or take it in at that moment, but she'll think about your words later, at another time.

12. **You might ask her to figure out what she authentically feels she can change in her life and what is impossible to change.** By facing the realities head on, she may slowly begin to back off from struggling against those areas of her life, which are indelibly set.

13. **In discussing the areas she can change, help her to think through different coping skills.** At this point, you might introduce the topic of denial, and suggest to her that by denying her stress, she's simultaneously perpetuating it. She may only know how to cope by denying. Over a period of time, you might want to explain how denial manifests, the conscious and unconscious techniques—from suppression to displacement. You might also suggest other approaches to her problems, but only if she appears ready to hear it.

14. **It is critical that she understand the value of affiliation, closeness, and intimacy.** It would be most helpful if she became aware of how much her anxiety diminishes when talking it out with you. She might not connect that feeling with the larger world. Point out how sharing, communicating, and expressing her feelings help to defuse burnout tension. Suggest that she begin to develop a support system for herself at work and at home. Let her know just how valuable the help, support, and reinforcement of others can be in reversing burn-out. And, while you're at it, you might underscore her need to avoid isolation.

15. **Encourage her to trust her feelings, and not to back down because they're politically, socially, or traditionally incorrect**. Propriety has little to do with feelings. Point out to her that she needs no permission to love, to hate, to be angry, sexual, or to laugh or cry. There is no right and wrong here. If she suggests that her feelings are holding her back from exploring new terrain, allow her to research those frightened feelings with an eye toward clearing up the emotional debris that promoted them.

16. **Ask her to explore what she feels she wants right now, and what she feels she needs**. If her "wants" are longer or greater than her "needs," you might point out how her needs have been eclipsed and neglected by the compulsion of her wants. Again, remind her of pacing and balance in her life. If her career is receiving most of the attention, ask her to discuss what she needs in her personal life. If her relationship has obliterated all other concerns, ask her what she needs outside of that relationship to defuse some of the intensity.

17**. If she is a woman with her nose to the grindstone everyday, let her know that she might begin to take her work a little less seriously and, more important, a little less personally.** Suggest methods she can employ to care more for herself, attend to her neglected needs, and begin to enjoy time spent unstructured. Make inquiries into the amount of sleep she's getting, ask if she's eating properly, and if she's had a medical checkup recently. As she begins to absorb the need she has for some of these self-caring functions, her focus might take a much-needed shift.

18**. Suggest that she read some of the literature on stress, anxiety, and burnout.** She may only be ready to absorb and correlate the suggestions you've been encouraging after she's read the material and identified with her symptoms on the printed page.

19**. If she's too deeply into the burnout stages to reflect upon these ideas refer her to a professional for either counseling or therapy**. Sit with her while she makes the call, and perhaps, if your schedule permits, offer her further support by accompanying her to her first appointment.

20. **By all means, tell her to take heart**. There are scores of other women, like herself, who have unwittingly veered onto the Burnout Cycle, yet who have been able not only to reverse the process, but also to prevent its recurring under similar circumstances. By following some simple steps, she will regain her sense of joy, her humor, and her spirit.

When you're helping a burned-out person, it is crucial she be made aware that her condition is caused by stress, pressure, and subsequent exhaustion, and that she not assume all the blame for this occurrence.

Too many women have come to believe that they are responsible for the feelings of others, for changing that which is unchangeable, and are therefore culpable for events beyond their control. It would be especially wise to aid her in relieving any additional guilt-provoking burdens. After all, you've been there, and will undoubtedly remember that the harshness with which you handled yourself was your biggest battle with burnout.

"NO PEACE IN THE WORLD WITHOUT
PEACE IN THE NATIONS;
NO PEACE IN THE NATIONS WITHOUT
PEACE IN THE TOWN;
NO PEACE IN THE TOWN WITHOUT
PEACE IN THE HOME;
NO PEACE IN THE HOME WITHOUT
PEACE IN THE HEART."

From the *Tao Te Ching*

In Defense of Ourselves

"Women have the right to live in freedom from fear of attack . . . But we do not have that freedom yet."

-From *Taking Control:* A *Personal Safety Handbook,*
Published by Women Organized Against Rape, Philadelphia, PA

Defense with Sense: Practical Tips for Women

Today's woman stands an excellent chance of being assaulted, raped or robbed. The overall crime rate for the United States increases at a rate of about 15 percent per year. The rate for assault is even greater; while in some cities the rate for rape has climbed as high as 200 percent, not to mention the attempted and unreported rapes.

Research reports show one common element in 100 percent of the cases where a woman successfully repelled or escaped from an assault-resistance, Jerrold Offstein, in Self-Defense for Women (National Press Books, 1972) says that those who have escaped resisted by making a noise, physical resistance, or both. According to the study, not one woman got free who failed to resist her attacker. "Sixty percent of all the successfully repelled assaults were accomplished by presentation of loud noise alone. "

Here are some practical methods of self-defense if an attack is imminent:

Always be Alert to the Possibility of an Attack

Be ready to scream or use a loud whistle to frighten the assailant and call attention to the dangerous situation. People may respond quicker to a scream of "fire", as they are often afraid of becoming involved in a call of "help" or "police".

- Glance about to see if you are being followed. Walk in the middle of the sidewalk, not near doorways or alleyways; nor near the curb where someone may be lurking in a parked car. I f followed or approached, cross the street or change directions. If a car follows you, make an about-face and keep walking. He will have to change directions to keep following you. –Avoid shortcuts and deserted areas
-Avoid being out alone at night. Stick with crowds
- Be prepared at all times to scream and run to a well-lighted residential or business area. Never run to your own door when followed. Keep your purse securely under your arm, preferably under your coat, with the latch toward you. If you are being followed, a mailbox makes a good safety deposit box. Your purse can be recovered from postal authorities at a later time. If you are cornered and he wants only your purse, it may be better to surrender it than to anger him.

Use of Keys

Have car keys or house keys in your hand. While you search for the key, an assailant can slip up behind you. A key carried between each knuckle can be used as a weapon to be raked over an assailant's face; but be sure to swing the hand sideways. A forward motion will only push the keys into your own hand.

In the Automobile

When driving, keep doors locked and windows up. Never give rides to (or accept rides from) strangers. Keep valuables on the floor or in the glove compartment out of plain sight. Keep your car in gear when stopped, and be prepared to drive away sounding the horn if you are threatened.
- If followed, never pull over or drive into your own driveway. Try to get the license number and description and drive to the police station or any open business.
- If your car breaks down, raise the hood, tie a white cloth to the doorknob, and sit inside with the doors locked until a policeman arrives. If you are near a main road, try flashing your lights or honking your horn. Do not go with strangers, but ask them to call a tow truck.
- Park in well-lighted areas near your destination. Lock the car. Look behind the seats when you return. Leave car lights on until your garage door is open and you are well inside. Have an outdoor light on. If possible, have someone meet you when you arrive home.

At Home

Change locks when you move into a house or apartment. You do not know who might have keys to the old locks. A pin tumbler or square bolt are hard for an intruder to force. Install a peephole and chain lock.
- List only your last name and initials on your mailbox and in the telephone directory.
- Ask for positive identification from salesmen or repairmen.
- Instruct children or baby-sitters never to open the door to strangers. Protect neighbors by never revealing that they live alone.
- Keep windows locked. Draw shades after dark. Leave lights on in two rooms to give the impression that there are at least two people in the house.
- Do not enter an elevator or Laundromat with strange men. Alternate the times you use the Laundromat or do your shopping. Arrange to go with other people.

- Do not enter or call out if your doors or windows have been forced. Call the police from a neighbor's telephone and wait outside. Never take for granted that suspicious persons or cars have been reported. It is better to be embarrassed over a false alarm than to be killed.

The Telephone

If a stranger comes to your door requesting use of your telephone, tell him you will make the call for him.

- Do not give your name, address or telephone number to a caller; rather ask him what number he is calling. Avoid prolonging crank calls by asking if they mind your taping them.

- If calls persist, turn your face a couple of inches from the telephone, and say, "Yes, this is the same person who called before." If calls still continue, put the receiver down and go next door to call the police. The phone will keep his line open to yours.

If You Are Attacked

When you are alone, keep alert to possibilities. You must learn to "think safety". You are one jump ahead if you are not taken by surprise and another jump ahead if you can catch the assailant by surprise.

- If you are attacked, do not panic! Scream and resist. This is no time for you to practice all the fancy throws you have learned in judo class. Do what you need to do.